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Arms-deal probers to seek Swiss help

By J. H. Doyle
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Justice Department investigators plan to ask the Swiss government to waive its strict bank secrecy laws in an attempt to get to the bottom of a scheme that diverted up to \$30 million from U.S. arms sales to Iran to Nicaragua's anti-Marxist rebels.

Swiss law normally prevents disclosure of any information related to so-called "numbered" accounts, some of which were used to transfer funds to the anti-Marxist rebel forces.

Sources said the department also is investigating whether a group of U.S. government officials and private American citizens violated an array of arms export, intelligence oversight and neutrality laws in the bizarre scheme that was publicly disclosed Tuesday.

Attorney General Edwin Meese indicated yesterday that involvement in the scheme went beyond Vice Adm. John Poindexter, who resigned as President Reagan's national security adviser Tuesday and his aide, Lt. Col. Oliver North, who was fired.

"It appears there were some others involved," Mr. Meese said on ABC television. "There are some consultants involved and other people who have a tangential relation-

ship to the U.S. government."

Under a 1977 mutual assistance treaty, the Swiss government agreed to waive its bank secrecy laws in certain U.S. criminal investigations. Normally, such requests are directed to the Swiss Federal Office of Police Matters.

Swiss bank accounts were used to channel \$10 million to \$30 million to Nicaraguan rebel leaders, according to Mr. Meese. The money represented profit from six U.S. arms shipments to Iran, through Israel, prior to Oct. 1.

Justice investigators want to determine who established the accounts and who deposited and withdrew funds at various times during the past 15 months, sources said.

Mr. Meese personally questioned Col. North and several other key figures in an extraordinary session Sunday. The Associated Press reported. Also, Col. North's private files at his White House office reportedly were seized by government investigators yesterday, and the FBI was formally brought into the investigation.

The Justice Department is pursuing leads that Col. North hired several private consultants to help facilitate the weapons shipments to Iran and to channel funds to the Contras.

Justice investigators plan to interview several people reportedly linked to a network of U.S.-based supporters of the Nicaraguan rebels, including:

- Donald P. Gregg, the national security adviser to Mr. Bush.

- Max Gomez, also known as Felix Rodriguez, a former CIA official.

- Thomas Clines, a Middle East expert and former director of training for CIA clandestine operations.

- Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard V. Secord, a Middle East expert.

- Retired Army Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, who heads the U.S. Council for World Freedom.

- William Langton, president of the Southern Air Transport Co., which has been linked to shipments of arms to Iran and arms to the Nicaraguan rebels.

No one has been accused of any wrongdoing.

Justice investigators also plan to question Nicaraguan rebel leaders to determine whether they actually received the money from the U.S. arms sales.

At his Tuesday news conference, Mr. Meese hinted that his investigation was aided by electronic eavesdropping "intercepts," apparently conducted by the National Security Agency.